AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in this application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A system for managing an on-line virtual shopping cart which contains information about an item offered by a host merchant, comprising:

a shopping cart manager that creates [[and manages]] the virtual shopping cart and that detaches the virtual shopping cart prior to, or upon a shopper leaving a site of the host merchant to a different merchant's site;

an extract and verify module that performs a comparison between a host merchant's offer for the item and [[a rival merchant's]] an offer from the different merchant's site; [[and]]

a counter offer module that selectively requests a counter offer from the host merchant relative to the item;

a validation module that automatically prepares a counter offer relative to an underbid offer from the different merchant's site; [[which, when applicable, dynamically changes the item information in the virtual shopping cart, to reflect a change in the host merchant's offer based on the comparison by the extract and verify module]] and

the shopping cart manager automatically and selectively updates the item information in the virtual shopping cart to reflect the host merchant's counter offer, so that when the shopper returns to the host merchant's site for checkout, the shopper acquires the item at the host merchant's counter offer.

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2. (Currently amended) The system of claim 1, [[further including a]] wherein the validation module [[that]] assesses the validity of the different merchant [[validates the rival merchant's offer]].

3. (Currently amended) The system of claim 2, further [[including]] comprising a persistent database that stores information about the host merchant's item, the [[rival merchant's]] underbid offer, and the virtual shopping cart.

4. (Original) The system of claim 2, further including a checkout module.

5. (Currently amended) The system of claim 1, wherein the item information includes any one or more of:
- an item number, which is the number used to represent the item;
- an item description, which is the description of an item;
- a price, which is the price of the item quoted by the host merchant;
- a rival offer, which is the offer made by the [[rival]] different merchant;
- a merchant identifier, which is the identifier of the [[rival]] different merchant.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently amended) The system of claim 3, further including a browser that manages a persistent shopping session at [[a rival]] the different merchant's site.

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8. (Currently amended) The system of claim 3, wherein the shopping cart manager is responsible for performing any one or more of the following actions:

- detach action, which writes the shopping cart to the persistent database and marks the shopping cart as detached;

- checkout action, which initiates a purchase operation of the item offered by the host merchant;

- save action, which writes the shopping cart to the persistent database and marks the shopping cart as saved;

- resume action, which retrieves a previously saved shopping cart from the persistent database;

- delete action, which removes a previously saved copy of the shopping cart;

- add item action, which creates and adds a item to the shopping cart;

- update item action, which retrieves a designated cart item and updates corresponding information fields;

- delete item action, which deletes the designated cart item;

- compare item action, which determines whether [[a rival]] the different merchant [[is underbidding]] has underbidded the host merchant's offer for [[an]] the item.

9. (Currently amended) The system of claim 1, wherein the shopping cart is in any one of the following states: a detached state, or a saved state.

10. (Currently amended) The system of claim 2, wherein the persistent database includes information about rival merchants, which allows the validation module to monitor the rival merchants; and

wherein the information maintained on the rival merchants includes any one or more of:

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- frequency that shoppers initiate comparison shopping at specific rival merchants;

- frequency that the rival merchants underbid the host merchant's offer;

- amounts by which [[the]] a rival merchant has underbid the host merchant's offer.

11. (Currently amended) A method of managing an on-line virtual shopping cart which contains information about an item offered by a host merchant, comprising:

automatically initiating a shopping session by creating the virtual shopping cart and by detaching the virtual shopping cart prior to, or upon a shopper leaving a site of the host merchant to a rival merchant's site;

[[creating and managing the virtual shopping cart;]]

performing a comparison between a host merchant's offer for the item and [[a rival merchant's]] an offer from the rival merchant's site; [[and

when applicable, dynamically changing the item information in the virtual shopping cart, to reflect a change in the host merchant's offer based on the comparison]]

the host merchant automatically preparing a counter offer relative to an underbid offer from the rival merchant's site; [[which, when applicable, dynamically changes the item information in the virtual shopping cart, to reflect a change in the host merchant's offer based on the comparison by the extract and verify module]] and

the host merchant automatically and selectively updating the item information in the virtual shopping cart to reflect the host merchant's counter offer, so that when the shopper returns to the host merchant's site for checkout, the shopper acquires the item at the host merchant's counter offer.

12. (Currently amended) The method of claim 11, further [[including the

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step of validating the rival merchant's offer]] <u>comprising assessing the validity</u>
<u>of the rival merchant.</u>

13. (Currently amended) The method of claim 12, further [[including the
step of]] <u>comprising</u> storing information about the host merchant's item, the
rival merchant's offer, and the virtual shopping cart.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently amended) The method of claim 13, wherein <u>creating</u>
[[managing]] the virtual shopping cart <u>comprises</u> [[includes]] performing any
one or more of the following actions:

* detach action, which writes the shopping cart to the persistent database
  and marks the shopping cart as detached;
* checkout action, which initiates a purchase operation of the item offered
  by the host merchant;
* save action, which writes the shopping cart to the persistent database and
  marks the shopping cart as saved;
* resume action, which retrieves a previously saved shopping cart from the
  persistent database;
* delete action, which removes a previously saved copy of the shopping
  cart;
* add item action, which creates and adds an item to the shopping cart;
* update item action, which retrieves a designated cart item and updates
  corresponding information fields;
* delete item action, which deletes the designated cart item;
* compare item action, which determines whether [[a]] <u>the</u> rival merchant [[is
  underbidding]] <u>has underbidded</u> the host merchant's offer for [[an]] <u>the</u>

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item.

16. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[14]] 11, wherein if the rival merchant's offer is more competitive than the host merchant's offer, presenting the host merchant with an opportunity to counter-offer the rival merchant's offer.

17. (Currently amended) The method of claim 16, wherein, if the host merchant is unable to make a counter-offer, allowing [[a]] the shopper who initiates the shopping session to remove the item from the virtual shopping cart.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein upon termination of the shopping session, providing the shopper with an opportunity to purchase the host merchant's item.

19. (Currently amended) The method of claim 18, wherein upon termination of the shopping session, returning the shopper to [[a]] the host merchant's site.

20. (Currently amended) The method of claim 19, wherein [[the step of]] activating the [[persistent]] shopping session is initiated when the shopper leaves the host merchant's site.

21. (Currently amended) The method of claim 20, further [[including]] comprising deactivating the persistent shopping session when the shopper returns to the host merchant's site.

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22. (Currently amended) A computer program product <u>having executable instructions codes</u> for managing an on-line virtual shopping cart which contains information about an item offered by a host merchant, comprising:

[[a shopping cart manager that creates and manages]] <u>a first set of instruction codes for creating</u> the virtual shopping cart <u>and for detaching the virtual shopping cart prior to, or upon a shopper leaving a site of the host merchant to a different merchant's site</u>;

[[an extract and verify module that performs a comparison between a host merchant's offer and a rival merchant's offer; and

a counter offer module which, when applicable, dynamically changes the item information in the virtual shopping cart, to reflect a change in the host merchant's offer based on the comparison by the extract and verify module]]

<u>a second set of instruction codes for selectively requesting a counter offer from the host merchant relative to the item</u>;

<u>a third set of instruction codes for automatically preparing a counter offer relative to an underbid offer from the different merchant's site; and</u>

<u>a fourth set of instruction codes for automatically and selectively updating the item information in the virtual shopping cart to reflect the host merchant's counter offer, so that when the shopper returns to the host merchant's site for checkout, the shopper acquires the item at the host merchant's counter offer.</u>

23. (Currently amended) The computer program product of claim 22, further [[including a validation module that validates the rival merchant's offer]] <u>comprising a fifth set of instruction codes for validating the different merchant.</u>

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24. (Currently amended) The computer program product of claim 23, further [[including]] comprising a persistent database that stores information about the host merchant's item, the [[rival]] different merchant's offer, and the virtual shopping cart.

25. (Currently amended) The computer program product of claim 23, further [[including a checkout module]] comprising a sixth set of instruction codes for allowing the shopper to checkout from the host merchant's site.

26. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein if the rival merchant's offer is more competitive than the host merchant's offer, the second set of instruction codes presents the host merchant with an opportunity to counter-offer the rival merchant's offer.

27. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein, if the host merchant is unable to make a counter-offer, the second set of instruction codes allows the shopper who initiates the shopping session to remove the item from the virtual shopping cart.

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